Low Key Anticipation For Exxon Ruling

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Casey Kelly/KMXT

Another day passed Thursday (today) in which the U-S Supreme Court issued a number of decisions, but still no verdict in the Exxon Valdez oil spill punitive damages case. A decision is expected sometime next week, but as KMXT’s Casey Kelly reports, fishermen in Kodiak say life will go on no matter what the high court decides.

It’s been more than 19 years since the Exxon Valdez oil spill created arguably the worst man-made disaster in U-S history. Although Cordova and other communities closer to the spill ended up with more oil on their beaches, Kodiak was the largest fishing port to be hit.

In the spring of 1989 Jeff Allen was supposed to tender herring, but the oil spill put a stop to that. Now Dungeness and halibut fisherman, Allen says he was lucky because he still got to go dungy fishing that year.

(Allen 1 :12s “…hell of a mess.”)

Allen has a small settlement due to him if the Supreme Court rules in favor of the plaintiffs. However, he says he’s not really paying that much attention to it.

(Allen 2 :07s “…which way it goes.”)

For the most part, Allen says, fishermen in Kodiak don’t have time to be worried about the decision.

(Allen 3 :08s “…basing our lives on.”)

In the summer of 1989 Dave Martin was supposed to go salmon fishing in Cook Inlet. He says the oil spill not only prevented fishing that season, it hurt the industry for years to come. Exxon, he says, owes him money.

(Martin

1	:14s	“…it hurt us all.”)

Martin says he doesn’t want to think about what might happen if the Supreme Court rules in Exxon’s favor.

(Martin

2	:03s	“…against the law.”)

But on the other hand, if the ruling is in the plaintiffs’ favor:

(Martin

3	:07s	“…our lives back.”)

The Exxon Valdez litigation is one of ten cases the Supreme Court is supposed to rule on before its term ends. Although the term officially closes on Monday, the court could issue a ruling anytime next week.

I’m Casey Kelly.

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